

IMPORTANT!!!
I EXPECT STUDENTS TO READ THIS SYLLABUS IN ITS ENTIRETY!
Throughout the course I will NOT reply to routine questions with answers already provided in the syllabus!! Please print out the syllabus and follow the schedule of classes closely!!

Research Methods in Sociology

Online Course

SOCIOLOGY 2301 W01: Fall 2014
Kennesaw State University

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Have you ever made an assertion such as “*kids don’t play outside anymore like they used to?*” or “*women earn less money and work in less prestigious occupations than men*”, or “*social ties are weakening in modern society*” only to have people disagree with you? They may have replied with an argument such as “everybody is different” or “in my area it is not like that” or “I think it depends”? How do we know that what “we know” is truly a trend that is happening?

It is only through **social science research** that we can test whether our “common sense” and perceptions are accurate. Arguments based on scientific social research do not reflect someone’s opinion or perception; nor are they a collection of anecdotes obtained from random, “man-on-the street” media interviews. They are not “what everyone knows” or what “people have always known”, though often times, results of scientific research can confirm what people already knew intuitively. Alternatively, results can surprise us by revealing unexpected patterns of behavior. Understanding the principles of the scientific method gives people the priceless advantage of being able to separate cultural beliefs, myths, ideology, or propaganda from reality - a skill that should serve you quite well both in college and in life.

This is an introductory course, the first of a two-course sequence required in the major (SOCI 2301 and SOCI 4499). The course provides an introduction to concepts and techniques of social science research. Students will acquire a foundational understanding of research methods in sociology, the nature of sociological investigation, the relationship between theory and research, the advantages and disadvantages of various methods of

investigation, their benefits and limitations, as well as their ethical and practical implications.

Students will acquire the foundational knowledge needed to conduct data collection in both quantitative and qualitative research methods during the next two parts of the sequence.

COURSE OBJECTIVES (Learning Outcomes):

- CO1 → Understand, describe and exemplify the main principles of social science research methods.
- CO 2→ Describe and apply appropriate ethical practices in doing human-based research, including IRB processes.
- CO 3→ Critically assess published research articles and explain how the studies could have been improved.
- CO 4 → Design and pre-test an original survey; bring necessary modifications based on pretest results.
- CO 5 → Consider opposing hypotheses and how viewpoints are critically assessed and supported by empirical data.
- CO 6→ Write a literature review in an area of choice.

Minimum Technology Requirements, Course Strategies and Methods

This is an entirely online course and will be conducted entirely through the D2L platform. Students are expected to have the necessary computer background to work in this format, and are advised to seek additional technical assistance from computer services if needed [See resource links in Welcome Module]. Students will be expected to read each assigned chapter carefully, and then use the linked Lecture Notes and PowerPoint presentations as review material. **D2L works better with Firefox as a web browser. Please do not take this class on Smart phones as they are not as reliable as a computer for online teaching! PLEASE PRINT OUT THE SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND FOLLOW IT CLOSELY TO KNOW WHICH CHAPTERS WE COVER EVERY WEEK. Questions asking ‘which chapter are we covering today?’ will not be answered. Please also keep up with the readings; retrospective postings will not be accepted!**

The **e-mail function** and the **Announcement** section in D2L will be our other forms of communication. I will email everyone or post a message under the “Announcements” section with important updates and general comments. Students can always contact me via e-mail. Expect responses within 24-48 hours, except in rare cases when I might be traveling or otherwise away from my computer.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:

Neuman, Lawrence W. 2009: Understanding Research, Pearson, 1st Ed, 0-205-47153-6 / 978-0-205-47153-9

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Board Participation: 15% of Final Grade

Every week the instructor will post a question on a Discussion Board in D2L, based on the scheduled specified on the last page in the syllabus.

1. The first participation will be on the Board reserved for Student Introductions. Instructions will be found at the top of the Discussion Thread, and this will take the place of the typical in-class go-around introductions.

2. For the rest of the semester, students will actively participate on the Discussion Board **at least once a week**, as we proceed at the approximate pace indicated on the schedule in the syllabus.

- How it works:

We will dedicate Monday and Wednesday for the Discussion Board. I will post a question on the Discussion Board on Monday and Wednesday morning and expect you to answer it till the end of the day. You will have to participate on the Discussion Board only once a week, so you may pick either Monday or Wednesday. Retrospective posts will not be accepted since we have to advance quickly to the next chapter.

On the same board the students will also be able to post specific related topics or questions that they want to bring up for discussion in class. Generally speaking, the Discussion Boards will be where class interaction will take place and the best place for students to ask questions, make comments, clarify things, and especially demonstrate that they have read and understood the chapters.

The discussions/dialogue on boards will be multi-directional: student-student, student-content, student-instructor, and instructor-student. From past experience, around 800 postings are likely to be made by students during the term. The instructor will reply to about 10% of the total postings, often engaging a whole thread at one time and addressing key concepts that several students bring up.

At least one post per board must be IN RESPONSE to an already existing thread started by a colleague or the instructor. Do not always start your own new thread!

- Evaluation method:

The instructor is more interested in the *content and substance* of comments than their length. In fact, very long postings summarizing the textbook material should be avoided, as it is expected that everyone in class will read all postings as they develop into a large group conversation. The instructor will get statistics of how many postings each student reads, how many posts are made, and how many hours are spent on the site. Basic

grammar should be taken into account. Spell checking and proof reading are always a good idea. Consult the Writing Center [see: Links Page in Welcome Module] for assistance with writing. But content will remain foremost for assessment purposes.

- Online Etiquette:

Questions are encouraged, and polite disagreements are fine. However, *respect is a basic necessity in all online interactions*. According to KSU Computer Usage Policy and Guidelines [www.kennesaw.edu/infosec]: You may not employ lewd or threatening language in any electronic communication. This would violate the bounds of good taste as well as laws and regulations. Please see the Etiquette Statement in the Welcome Module for a more detailed discussion.

2. Human Subjects Certifications: 10% of Final Grade

Because students will be involved in their own original research during the next course of the Research Methods course sequence, they will be required to complete an assignment on issues related to research with human subjects. The Institutional Review Board wants to make sure that people involved in research are treated ethically.

This assignment requires about 1 hour to complete. See details in D2L. Steps:

1. Go to www.kennesaw.edu/irb
2. Go to Training Certificates.
3. Create a personal profile with your username and password. Do not forget to add your affiliation to KSU! Your role will be Student Researcher-Undergraduate.
4. From the Learner Menu, choose the course on *Human Research*. From the Human Research Grade Book, complete *Students in Research* module, followed by a 10 questions quiz.
5. Save **Course Completion Report** with your name as evidence that you have completed the above mentioned learning module and attach it to the assignment box in D2L. The quiz score will be the grade for this assignment.

3. Survey: 10% of Final Grade

Students will learn how to create an original survey, for possible use in future research projects. Be creative! Pick a topic, and design a questionnaire for a mail or Internet survey. You will have to be very explicit and clear as in mail surveys the respondent cannot ask anyone for clarification. You have a survey example on page 352 of your textbook (note that this example does not include a scale/index). Your survey should include:

- 10 close-ended questions
- 1 open-ended question
- 2-5 demographic questions

This assignment includes four parts:

4. Exams: 25% of Final Grade EACH!

There will be two multiple-choice exams (a Midterm and a Final) testing your textbook/theoretical knowledge of the topics we will discuss throughout the semester. Please make a note of the exam schedule and plan accordingly. Exams are essentially open book; students can take them wherever they can log on to a high-speed computer. But study and preparation are necessary because the exams are *timed* and the clock starts as soon as you begin, so there will not be time to look up answers. You must be prepared in advance to do well on the tests. Both the Midterm and the Final will have 40 questions and will be allotted 1 hour and 15 minutes. The questions asked in exams will primarily cover the major concepts covered in the textbook and on the Discussion Boards.

a. Strategy

Please make a note of the exam schedule and plan accordingly. After the Midterm exam is completed, the next Module of the course will be opened in D2L. Exams are essentially open book. But study and preparation are necessary because the exams are *timed* and the clock starts as soon as you begin, so there will not be time to look up answers. You must be prepared in advance to do well on the tests. The questions asked in exams will primarily cover the major issues and concepts covered in the text and on the discussion boards, as opposed to obscure dates, individual places and names, or the most briefly discussed concepts. The Midterm will provide feedback for students as the course gets underway.

b. “Make-Ups”

Given the highly condensed nature of this course, make-up exams will NOT be possible under any circumstances. Make sure you will be available to take the exam on the day scheduled, otherwise you will have to “make do” with a 0 score on that specific test.

c. Exam Study Assistance and Study Guides

To help you prepare for exams, the textbook has a useful companion website with glossary and a host of exercises to help you study. Use it extensively when preparing for exams. This will be your Study Guide although the textbook itself comes packed with a Study Guide. However, for every exam, your best study guide will be the CORE CONCEPTS in each chapter. I will also provide two brief Study Guides to maximize your success on the exam. However, keep in mind that relying only on these “last minute review” study guides will not be enough to ensure a high grade on your exams.

5. Interview: 15% of the grade

Students will learn how to create an interview guide, and how to record and transcribe an actual interview. The interview guide could eventually be used for a future research

study. This assignment includes three parts: cover letter for the interview, interview guide and transcription of a 30-40 minutes interview.

FINAL GRADE FORMULA:

Human Subjects Research Certificate	10 points
Survey	10 points
Interview	15 points
Discussion Board	15 points
Midterm exam	25 points
Final exam	25 points

OTHER INFORMATION

Course grade: 90-100=A 80-89=B 70-79=C 60-69=D Lower than 60=F

Academic Integrity Statement: Every KSU student is responsible for upholding the provisions of the Student Code of Conduct, as published in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. Section II of the Student Code of Conduct addresses the University's policy on academic honesty, including provisions regarding plagiarism and cheating, unauthorized access to University materials, misrepresentation/falsification of University records or academic work, malicious removal, retention, or destruction of library materials, malicious/intentional misuse of computer facilities and/or services, and misuse of student identification cards. Incidents of alleged academic misconduct will be handled through the established procedures of the University Judiciary Program, which includes either an "informal" resolution by a faculty member, resulting in a grade adjustment, or a formal hearing procedure, which may subject a student to the Code of Conduct's minimum one semester suspension requirement.

Disability Clause: Kennesaw State University provides support for students with disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to identify himself/herself as an individual with a disability. A qualified individual in the area of the identified disability must provide the documentation of the disability. This documentation must show how the disability creates a significant impact on the individual's academic performance; it should include suggested accommodations that are reasonable to provide in an academic setting. **Please contact instructor privately for all personal hardships.**

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus as well as the schedule below - as needed!

TENTATIVE WORK SCHEDULE FOR READINGS AND INDIVIDUAL WORK

	DAY	READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS DUE
1	Aug. 20	First day of class (orientation) Introduction of Syllabus Student Introductions
3	Aug. 24 Monday Wednesday	Ch.1: Why Do Research? Board posts due Board posts due
4	Aug. 31 Monday Wednesday	Ch 2: Planning A Study Board posts due Human Subjects Certification Assignment Due
5	Sep. 7 Monday Wednesday	Ch 3: Becoming an Ethical Researcher Board posts due Board posts due
6	Sep. 14 Monday Wednesday	Ch 4: Sampling Board posts due Board posts due
7	Sep. 21 Monday Wednesday	Ch 5: Measuring Social Life Board posts due No Board posts – Preparation for Midterm
8	Sep. 28 Monday Wednesday	Ch 6: The Survey (I) – Quantitative Research MIDTERM Board posts due
9	Oct. 5 Monday	Ch 6: The Survey (II) Board posts due

	Wednesday	No Board posts -Work on Original Survey Assignment
10	Oct. 12	Ch 9 Making Sense of Numbers (I) (Quantitative Research)
	Monday	Survey Due
	Wednesday	Board posts due
11	Oct. 19	Ch 9: Making Sense of Numbers (II) (Quantitative Research)
	Monday	Board posts due
	Wednesday	Board posts due
12	Oct. 26	Ch 8: Research With Non-Reactive Measures
	Monday	Board posts due
	Wednesday	Board posts due
13	Nov. 2	Ch 10: Observing People in Natural Settings I (Qualitative Research)
	Monday	Board posts due
	Wednesday	Board posts due
14	Nov. 9	Ch. 10: Observing People in Natural Settings II (Qualitative Research)
	Monday	Board posts due
	Wednesday	Board posts due
15	Nov. 16	Ch 11: Looking at the Past and Across Cultures (Historical and Cross-Cultural Research)
	Monday	Board posts due
	Wednesday	Board posts due
16	Nov. 24	Fall Break
17	Nov. 30	
	Monday	Research Day: Conduct and Transcribe your Interview
	Wednesday	Interview Due
18	Dec. 7	FINAL EXAM